



PRESS RELEASE

House National Security Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 22, 1997

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STATEMENT OF HONORABLE FLOYD D. SPENCE

MILITARY SERVICE CHIEFS HEARING ON QDR

Thursday, May 22, 1997

Today the committee continues its examination of the Quadrennial Defense Review as we hear from the four military service chiefs of staff.

When these gentlemen last testified before the committee, much of the discussion was about the readiness of the force to execute the national military strategy. There was a lot of talk about the difficulties of “doing more with less,” a situation that was the result of defense budget cuts, force reductions, and a growing number of peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.

Since that time, the national military strategy has changed. It has become more ambitious. The newly announced QDR strategy retains the commitment to be prepared to fight two major regional wars, but it also recognizes the labor intensive demands of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. In essence, the QDR acknowledges that our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are now, and will continue in the future, to do more.

At the same time, the QDR assumes a continued real decline in defense resources. First, the Budget Agreement calls for a five year defense budget that falls \$60 billion short of even keeping pace with inflation. And second, it calls for smaller forces.

In sum, the QDR will have our forces transiting from “doing more with less” to “doing even more with even less.”

In my view, this trend is going in the wrong direction. As the National Defense Panel has indicated, there is an inconsistency between the QDR strategy and projected resources. And I am deeply concerned that the result will be to exacerbate the readiness and modernization problems we are all familiar with.

Yesterday, Secretary Cohen was frank in explaining that the QDR plan would increase the risk to the security interests of the United States. He said, in effect, that he was willing to live with and adopt greater risk in the near term to better prepare for the future and to lessen the long-term risk.

While the debate over the QDR can quickly devolve into a discussion of end-strength, force structure and procurement programs, as I said yesterday, I believe we owe it to the American public to approach this debate from the perspective of risks, and the relationship between risks and the national interest. We are unable to put the QDR's recommendations into any meaningful context without a clearer understanding of the associated risks and trade offs.

Accordingly, I look to our witnesses, as both service chiefs and as members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to help us better understand the risks involved with the QDR and its recommendations.

Most of our witnesses have a record of testimony before this committee establishing that the pre-QDR personnel, equipment and resource baseline was the absolute minimum required to carry out the mission of your service. Assuming none of you plan to directly criticize the QDR, I hope that you will reconcile your positions, particularly in terms of the risk associated with the QDR's recommendations.